

Silver Wings

HAPPY NEW YEAR! With the winter holiday season behind us, the members of Silver Wings look forward to the new year and the many challenges that await us. The year 2000 was great for us, as we rose to meet many challenges, bringing the sounds of country music and the influence of the Air Force to millions of satisfied customers. In reflection, our greatest challenge was the production of our compact disc entitled *Freedom*. This recording is special because it was the very first popular music recording done in-house utilizing *Pro-Tools*, a complete hard-disk-based recording system. Under the engineering mastery of TSgt Loren Zimmer (a member of The Air Force Band Technical Support staff, and our resident recording engineer) and the production talent of TSgt Matthew Ascione (yours truly), we managed to put together a compilation of original songs and contemporary hits that easily holds its own against the very best of Nashville! We are certainly proud of this accomplishment. Another great success for us was our tour of the eastern coast of Maine. For 10 days we traveled, bringing our Air Force message to our audiences. We even had a

chance to play in Houlton, the hometown of TSgt Travis James Humphrey. What a great homecoming he received there!

I would be remiss if I did not mention the many achievements of Barnstormers, consisting of CMSgt James Queen, MSgt Chris Kosky, TSgt Travis James Humphrey, and TSgt Marie Mindnich. This group is highly requested by the highest-ranking individuals in the Washington, D.C. area, because of its ability to adapt its bluegrass style to fit any occasion. One notable show for the Barnstormers was the recent performance for Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Hugh Shelton who hosted his counterpart from Greece. It was also the first time our resident linguist, Chief Queen, had the opportunity to utilize his modest knowledge of the Greek language!

As great as these accomplishments have been for us, we know that we are only as good as our next performance. We look forward, in the new year, for the opportunity to use our music as a tool to entertain the public, as we deliver a positive Air Force message.

--TSgt Matthew Ascione

Alumni News

It's funny how seemingly unrelated childhood incidents can evolve into a successful career. In the case of Harold Copenhaver, two such incidents led him to join the Army Air Corps Band as a private in 1942. Because of them, he wound up retiring from the U.S. Air Force music program, 23 years later, to embark on a successful career as an educator and administrator. Those incidents: his desire to avoid milking the family cows, and his parents' purchase of a used (and to him fascinating) Underwood manual typewriter over 60 years ago.

Born in Girard, Kansas on December 6, 1921, "I had a choice of milking cows or practicing the piano, and I chose practicing the piano. I went to a one-room country school. I got a good education because I heard everything eight times — we had eight grades in one room." In high school "the band director said, 'Do you want to come and play in the band?' and I said I didn't know what to play and he said, 'well play this (a French horn),' and I've played it the rest of my life." And how did the typewriter fit in? "I had this old typewriter that my folks bought. It was a used typewriter and I still have it — and it works." Self taught, he became exceptionally proficient on the keyboard.

During his first semester at Pittsburgh (Kansas) State Teachers College, "I took this civil service exam and they sent me a telegram and they said you can come on and work (in Washington, D.C.) so I did. I worked at the War Department for \$1,220 per year," not a bad beginning salary in 1939!

6 One day at work "this piece of paper came across my desk (at the War



Department) which said that the Army Air Corps Band had been increased from 28 pieces to 48, so I called the director (Chief Warrant Officer Alf Heiberg) and he said to come on over and take an audition." Copenhaver won the audition and enlisted in 1942.

When then Captain George Howard took command of the Army Air Corps Band in 1944, he learned about Copenhaver's office skills and told him to "consider yourself a permanent member of this organization!" Copenhaver recalls, "One day soon thereafter he dictated 105 letters — all different letters — and I stayed up all night typing them because I didn't want my short hand notes to get cold." The office work was in addition to playing in a section with horn players like the legendary Arthur Berv. Concurrently Cope, as he is known to his friends, started taking classes at American University. After 15 years, he earned his doctorate in 1961. His thesis is entitled *An*

Historical Investigation of Music Education in the United States Air Force.

While a master sergeant, he applied for and eventually received a reserve commission in the inactive reserves, thereby simultaneously becoming an active duty sergeant and a reserve second lieutenant. When then Colonel Howard wanted to increase his staff, Cope was the natural choice. So on the evening of June 25, 1950, MSgt Harold Copenhaver left the Band office for his home, and the next morning Second Lieutenant Harold Copenhaver reported for duty to that same office as assistant adjutant. His many subsequent duties have included commandant of the band school, chief of bands in the Pentagon, and commander and conductor of the Air Force Academy Band.

What brought him into music education and finally administration? "I had been preparing to teach and go into higher education all my life," and when the opportunity presented itself, he retired from the Air Force music program and accepted a position as professor of brass at Northeast Missouri State University (now Truman University). After five years of teaching, he became an assistant to the vice president of the university. Seven years later he accepted the position of dean of fine arts at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro.

Retiring (again) in 1987, he and his wife of 54 years, Ladye, still reside in Jonesboro. They have attended every Retired Air Force Musicians reunion ever held, happily reminiscing with their numerous friends about the days when they collectively earned The USAF Band's worldwide reputation. --CMSgt (ret.) Harry Gleeson